

December 15, 1947

New School Opening Soon At Halloran

Belief that the Willowbrook State School for Mentally Deficient Children on the Halloran VA Hospital tract will be opened "shortly after Jan. 1" was expressed today by Commissioner Frederick MacCurdy of the state department of Mental Hygiene.

The commissioner said work pending the formal opening of the school was "proceeding steadily," but that the slow arrival of special equipment and laundry machinery will delay transferral of children to the school until next year.

"We are as anxious as anyone to get the school opened," MacCurdy said.

Forty per cent of the state-owned tract on which Halloran stands has been fenced off for use by the state agency. The opening of the school will mark the first time that the facility, completed six years ago, will be put to use by the department, for which it was constructed.

Mental Cases Due October 1 At Halloran

State Prepares to Send Children Into Its Section of Willowbrook Institution as Patients

Mentally-deficient children will be transferred to the state's facilities on the grounds of Halloran VA Hospital from other institutions beginning shortly after Oct. 1, it was learned today.

The state is now readying its section of the Willowbrook institution for the receipt and care of the mentally-ill children. As soon as those preparations are completed the children will be brought to the Island.

It was learned that plans are not yet completed for admitting the children directly to the institution.

Forty per cent of the institution will be utilized by the state Department of Mental Hygiene. Construction is already underway on 5,700 feet of eight-foot high wire fence that will enclose the state's section. It will begin at the administration buildings and include eight other buildings.

Separate From VA Area

Construction of the fence will separate the state's section completely from that of the Veterans Administration's.

When the children are finally brought to the institution, it will be the first time the facility will have been put to the use for which it was constructed.

Building of the Halloran plant began before the war and construction was halted by the war. But the Army had need for a general hospital in this area and leased the institution from the state.

The VA was granted an extension of its use of 60 per cent of the institution for the treatment of its patients in July. That extension will run out the end of next June.

At that time it was indicated that the VA would use the hospital until such time as a permanent facility in the New York area could be erected so that patients and personnel could be transferred to the newer facility.

Island organizations have been fighting for the retention of Halloran as a permanent veterans facility. However, a VA committee from Washington has been examining sites in all parts of the city as possible locations of the permanent VA hospital.

January 21, 1948

Willowbrook Opening Delayed

Opening of the Willowbrook State School for Mentally Deficient Children on the Halloran VA Hospital tract has been delayed because of "unexpected difficulty in obtaining equipment," Commissioner Frederick MacCurdy of the state Department of Mental Hygiene said today.

MacCurdy said in Albany that there is still no "definite assurance" that the school will be opened before spring, although, he said, it is "hoped that this will be possible."

Formal opening of the school, which will utilize 40 per cent of the Halloran tract, has been pending since last October, when preparation work got underway for the first utilization of the facility erected for the purpose six years ago. It has since been operated by the War Department and the Veterans Administration through leasing arrangements.

Work pending the opening is "proceeding steadily," the commissioner said, although installation of special equipment has been delayed.